

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 1645

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF AXEL
SPRINGER

1. IN VIEW OF POSSIBLE MEETING BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND
GERMAN NEWSPAPER MAGNATE AXEL SPRINGER FOLLOWING THE BERLIN
TOWN MEETING AT THE CONGRESS HALL, WE ARE SUPPLYING FOLLOWING
BRIEF BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH.

2. AXEL SPRINGER WAS BORN IN ALTONA, AN OUTLYING PORTION
OF HAMBURG, MAY 2, 1912. FOLLOWING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
HE BECAME, THROUGH A SERIES OF SHREWD MANEUVERS, HARD
WORK AND GREAT DETERMINATION THE OWNER OF THE LARGEST
NEWSPAPER CHAIN IN THE FRG AND BERLIN. HIS ANTI-NAZI VIEWS
HELPED HIM TO OBTAIN FROM THE BRITISH OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES
HIS INITIAL LICENSE TO PUBLISH AFTER THE WAR.

3. SPRINGER'S BERLIN NEWSPAPERS - BZ, BILD, MORGENPOST
AND DIE WELT (PRINTED IN HAMBURG BUT DISTRIBUTED IN
BERLIN) ACCOUNT FOR EIGHTY PERCENT OF WEST BERLIN'S
NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION. IN THE FRG HIS PAPERS HAVE HUGE
CIRCULATION. SOME OF SPRINGER'S NEWSPAPERS ARE SENSATION-
ALIST TABLOIDS; OTHERS ARE SERIOUS. ALL TAKE A
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CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL LINE AS WELL AS A STRONG PRO-
AMERICAN STANCE. SPRINGER SOMETIMES ESPOUSES "COLD
WAR" POLICIES WITH RESPECT TO DEALING WITH THE COMMUNIST
BLOC. HIS CRITICS, OF WHICH THERE ARE MANY, CHARGE HIM
WITH BEING TOO CONSERVATIVE OR SIMPLY OF WIELDING TOO
MUCH POWER.

4. SPRINGER HAS BEEN COMPARED ON MANY OCCASIONS TO WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST. THE COMPARISON IS A FAIR ONE, NOT ONLY ON THE POLITICAL PLANE BUT ALSO IN THAT SPRINGER HAS GENEROUSLY ENDOWED NUMEROUS CULTURAL PROJECTS IN BERLIN. LIKE HEARST, HE IS BOTH RESPECTED AND FEARED BY GERMANY'S POLITICAL LEADERS BECAUSE OF THE POWER HIS NEWSPAPERS WIELD.

5. SPRINGER IS MARRIED (WIFE'S NAME IS FRIEDE). HE ENJOYS GOLF AND SAILING. SPRINGER UNDERSTANDS AND SPEAKS ENGLISH WELL IN RELAXED SOCIAL SITUATIONS. HE PREFERS, HOWEVER, TO SPEAK GERMAN WHEN DISCUSSING POLITICS (WHICH HE DOES WITH PASSIONATE INTENSITY) OR WHEN MEETING PROMINENT FOREIGN DIGNITARIES. HE IS DESCRIBED BY CLOSE ASSOCIATES AS ESSENTIALLY A DECENT, GENEROUS MAN WHO IS SOMETIMES ISOLATED FROM REALITY BECAUSE OF HIS PRESS LORD POSITION. GEORGE

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